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## **Environment Department Ready With Aid After Bosque Fire**

(Santa Fe, NM) — Governor Bill Richardson has requested all Cabinet Secretaries provide whatever assistance necessary to the City of Albuquerque in responding to the Bosque fire. As first responders battle the flames, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is prepared to aid with environmental restoration once the last embers are extinguished.

“A fire like this can create huge water quality problems, especially when it burns so close to a vital resource like the Rio Grande,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “The loss of vegetation can lead to increased runoff, degrading the waters for miles downstream.”

To help limit runoff and other “nonpoint” sources of water pollution, NMED allocates approximately \$2 million annually to use as matching grants for water quality improvement projects. These monies, allocated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), stem from section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act.

In recent years this program has been used to aid fire restoration projects around New Mexico, including efforts to limit water degradation following the Cerro Grande, Borrego, and Ponil Complex fires.

Projects to protect the Rio Grande and restore the Bosque could include revegetation, such as the planting of cottonwood saplings and reseeding, as well as the placement of straw bales, all to stabilize the riverbanks and promote the re-growth of native flora. NMED experts will also be available as information resources and to monitor water quality in the area if needed.

Secretary Curry has toured the Bosque this week to personally inspect the damage.

“NMED will do all it can to help protect and restore this area once the fire is out,” said Secretary Curry.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED, at (505) 827-0314.

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